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Signet Magazine will include a regular feature on the Signet Library's historic collections. In this edition researcher Karen Baston looks at some of the treasures stored in the Malcolm Room.

**T**he books on the Malcolm Room shelves may look old and dusty but there are some real treasures hidden among them. For example, there are old 'almanacks' printed in Aberdeen in the seventeenth century, pamphlets from both sides of the Union debate of 1707, and an edition of Virgil's Aeneid published in 'Scottish metir' in 1553.

There are also three special collections of books created by earlier generations of the Signet Library's librarians:

The Mary Queen of Scots Collection includes books about all aspects of Mary's life and times. Some of these were printed during her life but the collection also includes recent works. The collection is wide-ranging and features books in several languages including Latin, Italian, German, Scots, French, and Dutch. Especially interesting are the illustrations in these that show how Mary's image has changed over time. Sometimes she is a stern saintly figure and sometimes she is an elegant pouting Victorian miss.

The Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun Collection is made up of books used by Robert Andrew Scott Macfie to create his bibliography of the 'Patriot's' works. Included in the collection is the bibliography itself

which was printed in a limited edition in 1901 and which features facsimiles of the title pages of the other books in the collection.

The John Napier Collection celebrates the achievements of the famous Scottish theologian and mathematician – the inventor of logarithms – by bringing together early editions of his works.

The Malcolm Room books, taken as a whole, form a rich, varied, and valuable collection of books that share a common theme of Scottish history. Volunteer work has been underway since June 2010 to add these books to the Library's online catalogue. Holdings dating from before 1800 are also being reported to the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) to increase their accessibility as sources for scholarship.

*Karen Baston is a postgraduate student at the University of Edinburgh's School of Law (with support from the National Library of Scotland) and her doctoral research subject is 'The Library of Charles Erskine (1680-1763): Book Collecting and Lawyers in Scotland, 1700-1760'. Karen is undertaking part-time evaluation and cataloguing of books in the Signet Library's historic collection.*